



## **FUNDING SCHOOLS** by Ashley Rogers Berner

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### *Introduction*

Funding primary and secondary education is one of the chief budgetary commitments of modern governments. Annual worldwide spending on education tops \$2 trillion. Spending on all levels of education constitutes between 8 percent and 22 percent of government expenditures internationally.<sup>1</sup> Education spending averages 20 percent of each state budget in the United States.<sup>2</sup> In Singapore, a “small nation with no natural resources,” education is the second item on the national budget, after defense.

At a basic level, the funding of public education is a pragmatic exercise aimed at ensuring certain standards of literacy, numeracy and civic formation, and equal access, for all the children within jurisdiction. The nations represented in these volumes offer a variety of responses to these universal concerns. Some governments require that the school system be supported by fixed percentages of revenues or spending. Brazil, for instance, mandates

that 18 percent of federal revenues, and 25 percent of all regional and municipal revenues, flow to education. Romania's 2011 law requires that educational funding constitute 6 percent of GDP, an increase from 4 percent. Indonesia's constitution requires that 20 percent of the national budget be allocated to education. In some school systems, parental contributions for catering, textbooks, and even teachers' salaries, are the norm; Estonia and South Africa fall in this category. Most school systems pay particular attention to education of children from low-income families, whether through supplemental financial support, such as Title I (compensatory education) funding in the United States, or weighted per-pupil stipends in Romania, Portugal or Peru.<sup>3</sup>

Funding is often multi-layered. Australia's federal government pays for private schools, and the states and territories fund public schools. In Austria, the federal government funds all schools but channels the money through regional boards and municipalities. Each of the fifty United States has educational jurisdiction and controls its own funding; the federal government offers additional monies to induce change it deems important to educational quality. The Obama Administration's "Race to the Top," which rewards states for improving teacher evaluations and authorizing more charter schools, falls in this category.

At a deeper level, though, funding reflects philosophy. What constitutes "public education" in the first place? Does it refer to school systems which the government *runs*, or those which the government *funds*? If the government is committed to ideological uniformity or neutrality, how does that affect the funding of non- state alternatives? If the government is committed to pluralistic education, then which "pluralisms" are funded (language? ethnicity? religion?) and which are not? Moreover, what constraints do governments place upon the educational institutions that they fund?

Questions of financial allocation come to the fore most urgently when systems are under pressure, whether from a financial, demographic, academic or philosophical direction. The pressures on educational funding are now substantial. First, governments at all levels (municipal, regional, national) have been straining to fulfill commitments in the wake of the 2008 global recession. In this environment, labor agreements and educational efficiency bear close scrutiny, and governments are more likely to experiment with different models. The situation with private, unrecognized schools in India is a case in point, and is worth quoting in depth.<sup>4</sup>

Studies have repeatedly recorded that private schools serving poor populations have poor infrastructure as compared to government schools. Teachers in these private schools are paid less as compared to their counterparts in government schools. According to James Tooley of Newcastle University (UK), the teachers in private schools serving poor children receive one-third the salary of teachers in government schools. However, student – teacher ratios are better in these private

schools, which provides relatively more teacher time for each student. Private schools experience a high rate of attendance. They tend to introduce English as a second or third language at earlier grades and most of these private schools also offer instruction in English language. Parents value education in English, and tend to enroll their children in private schools, where they have to pay some fees as opposed to free government schools (Muralidharan, 2006). One of the important elements is high student performance in private schools. According to James Tooley's study of 918 schools in Hyderabad's slums, unrecognized private schools' students scored 22 percent higher than mean score in mathematics. A national study led by the NGO, Pratham, recorded that even in villages 16 percent of the pupils were now in private primary schools and achieved 10 percent higher scores in verbal and math (Das, 2006).

The academic and economic superiority of private schools has caught the attention of public officials and been translated into pilot voucher programs. Because such programs yielded significantly better academic results at lower cost than the state sector, they will likely expand, particularly for underprivileged children.

Second, our increasingly connected, global economy makes intellectual and vocational competence all the more important, and thus academic comparisons more salient.<sup>5</sup> Poor results on international tests such as TIMSS or PISA have caused some nations (Sweden, for instance) to re-think their curriculum and standards in the wake of consistently low scores, or to consider instituting national exams for the first time (Czech Republic). Substandard academic performance, lack of cross-cultural knowledge, and the achievement gap are cited as security concerns by a well-respected American policy institute.<sup>6</sup> Experts are scouring the world's school systems for evidence of precise interventions that improve student performance irrespective of culture.<sup>7</sup>

Third, new patterns of immigration and an unanticipated interest in religious community and expression are challenging the assumptions of many nations' educational policies. At the same time, post-modern philosophy has called into question the intellectual viability of state-sponsored, "neutral" systems of education. As two scholars put it recently,

Public education is at a critical juncture in virtually every liberal-democratic nation in the world. In contemporary liberal societies it was legitimized as the institution that would build a liberal and democratic industrial nation state by developing the surplus loyalty required to cement the particularistic and diverse religious and cultural components of a nation state together. Today it is an object of suspicion among those who view the modern state as the agent, not of freedom and liberty, but of colonization and oppression.<sup>8</sup>

In Europe, the impact of the International Covenants on Economic, Social and Cultural

Rights, and Civil and Political Rights, adopted by the United Nations in 1966 and coming into effect a decade later, has been substantial. Both treaties affirm the rights of parents “to ensure the religious and moral education of their children in conformity with their own convictions,” language which favors plural education. Even in nations (such as the United States) that signed the treaties but “with reservations,” that is without the obligation to apply them to domestic law, there are legal scholars who find their standards worthy of emulation.<sup>9</sup>

Many governments around the world are responding to these challenges theoretically, by re-thinking political and philosophical assumptions about education, and pragmatically, by re-allocating educational resources. Some of the countries in these volumes have long-standing systems that are inherently responsive to such challenges (the Netherlands); others have made major shifts in recent memory and are now analyzing results (New Zealand); still others seem to be at the beginning of fundamental changes in the conceptualizing and financing of public education (the United States). The focus of this chapter is the connection between funding and political philosophy, the conditions that governments place upon schools they fund, and small-scale innovation in government funding that might be worthy of broader application. Finally, larger policy implications and concerns are addressed in light of financial constraints and imperatives.

## *Political philosophy and its funding consequences*

What a society is willing to fund indicates its values and beliefs. As others discuss elsewhere in this volume, political philosophy is antecedent to educational policy. Every school system reflects assumptions about the meaning and purpose of education, the nature of the child, and the *locus* of authority. Modern educational systems tend towards a state-oriented model, in which the government not only funds but also provides a (usually) uniform product, or a civil-society model, in which governments regulate and fund education but civic organizations that reflect the plurality of beliefs and commitments within society provide it.<sup>10</sup>

Those nations that exclusively fund a uniform state school system include Brazil, China, Belarus, Bulgaria, Greece, Jordan, Latvia and Lithuania, Mexico, the Philippines, Ukraine, and Uruguay. Some of these systems claim ideological neutrality (Mexico, Uruguay); others support a particular state ideology (China, Belarus); still others include a religious standpoint (Greece, with right of withdrawal, or Jordan, which provides Islamic education).

What constitutes “plural education” depends upon the context, as the country profiles in these volumes make clear. The United States, whose fifty states have traditionally funded

uniformity, is gradually permitting more variety in school governance (charters) and delivery (online learning). In other countries, uniformity bends to accommodate language or ethnicity. China, which supports uniform, socialist schools, permits ethnic minorities to be educated in their native languages. The three peoples of Malaysia enjoy distinctive ethnic and cultural schooling within a common curricular framework. Bulgaria funds Turkish- language schools.

Most of the time, however, “plural education” refers to a commitment to fund schools that reflect the beliefs and commitments of parents, whether religious, philosophical, or pedagogical. A majority of liberal democracies support some form of plural education. Foremost among them is the Netherlands, which “can justly claim to have the most pluralistic school system in the world.” Dutch citizens have, since the nineteenth century, possessed the freedom to establish schools, to give them a distinctive ethos, to train teachers according to particularist convictions, and even to request government-funded religious education in otherwise “neutral” schools.

The nations that do fund plural education accomplish this in different ways, as the country profiles illustrate. The most common mechanism is to support a fixed percentage of the operations of non-state schools. Estonia funds state and private schools at the same rate. Norway provides 85 percent of the total funding for non- state schools. Slovenia’s arrangement is interesting, in that all legally-constituted private schools receive 85 percent of the salary and per-pupil cost assigned to state schools. At the same time, “in order to make private schools accessible to all classes of the population, the amount of tuition fees in private schools which receive public funds (that is in a majority of schools) is limited. The highest tuition fee may not exceed 15 percent of the cost per student in a public school.”

Denmark funds between 75-85 percent of the cost of non-state schools, and “subsidized private schools educate about 12 percent of compulsory school pupils (age 7-16).” Luxembourg’s percentage is rising and now provides 90 percent of the cost of non-state schools. Twenty-two percent of Italy’s schools are fully-funded “recognized,” non-state schools that are Catholic, Lutheran, Baptist, Adventist, Assemblies of God, and Jewish in orientation.

Israel’s state schools can be religious, secular, Arab-language, or Hebrew-language, but any private school that implements 75 percent of the core curriculum is fully funded. Even non-recognized private schools are eligible to receive 55 percent of their funding from government sources. The Netherlands gives block grants for staff, facilities and operations. Half of the children in Belgium’s French Community attend Catholic or independent schools that are fully funded by the state.

Some governments fund a combination of operations and capital costs. England’s

current formula is 100 percent of operations and 85 percent of capital costs, which makes schooling highly responsive to parental preferences. Thus, between 1975 and 1990, the number of Jewish children attending Jewish day schools increased from 20 percent to more than 60 percent, thanks to a religious formation awareness campaign by the Chief Rabbi's office.<sup>11</sup> At the same time, the structures of schooling can respond to demographic shifts in creative ways. In large urban areas, Catholic and Muslim children often share school space and secular subject teachers.<sup>12</sup>

The Portuguese government partners with private schools in economically deprived locales where state schools are scarce, by paying all costs of the school by means of a fixed amount per class. In other cases, it gives private schools a per-child stipend based on (low) family income. The total number of students affected by this program is negligible, however; 18 percent of Portuguese students attend non-state schools, but of these, only 16 percent are fully funded, and 8 percent are partially funded. The public debt in Portugal has grown so large that its longstanding commitment to an ever-expanding public sector is in question: "In 1974, the public debt represented 17.78 percent of GDP. In 1980, this amount was 35.74 percent and, in 2009, it was 79.0 percent. This and the economic crisis brought privatization of services to the frontline of public discussion." As the country profile indicates, the current government has changed its policy, giving parents the right to freely choose the school they wish among state and non-state public funded schools.

Other governments support plural education by subsidizing staff salaries. In Malta, Catholic schools pay for their own buildings and facilities, but teachers' salaries are paid from the government budget. The French government offers either a "simple" or an "association" contract to a variety of non-state schools. In the first instance, the state pays teachers' salaries; in the second, it covers teachers, administrators, and the cost of operations.

Yet another funding mechanism is to allow a per-pupil amount to follow students to schools selected by their parents, what in the United States is called a "voucher" program. Some states (such as Louisiana, Indiana and North Carolina) are experimenting with voucher or tax credit programs that indirectly fund religious or philosophical schools, although other states (such as Massachusetts) have laws prohibiting such actions. Six of Canada's 13 educational jurisdictions permit direct per-pupil funding to non-state schools at 35-70 percent of the calculated state cost at state schools. In British Columbia, for instance, there are four types of funding which non-state schools may elect, each with its own commensurate conditions. Level 1 schools receive 50 percent of per-child district level operations and account for 77 percent of private pupils; Level 2 schools receive 35 percent and educate 20 percent of the private pupils; Levels 3 and 4 schools receive no public funding and are not required to follow curricular or instructional protocols.

Romania's newest legislation (2011) allows a per-pupil amount, with weighting for special needs, to follow children to private schools. The amount is generally half of the average private tuition.

The novelty brought by the new Education Law is that the state offer a "basic funding" for each pupil in public, private and confessional primary and secondary education, and also for pupils in the public special post-secondary institutions. This funding takes the form of a standard sum for each student, established by the Ministry of Education, and it will "follow the pupil", being transferred to the school he/she learns. Local and county councils can contribute from their own budgets to basic funding. Additionally, there are some other two types of funding, complementary and additional, adding to the whole picture. While complementary funding is assured by local authorities' budgets, the additional funding (calculated as a fix global sum from the Ministry of Education's budget) rewards schools with high performance or which implement programs for integrating disadvantaged categories of pupils.<sup>13</sup>

Some countries have even begun to apply per-pupil funding to state and non-state schools alike. Georgia has instituted this model, as has Chile. Chile's attempt to motivate schools with public funding is longstanding; the number of private subsidized schools increased by 50 percent between 1980 and 1990. The grant is "paid monthly to the holder on a per-student basis, according to the average attendance of each student during the last three months prior to payment." This funding format attempts to reward schools that are responsive to the needs of families and that produce respectable academic results.

Funding of non-state schools can affect local finance in unexpected ways. In Sweden, where 12 percent of all Swedish pupils and 24 percent of secondary pupils attend funded non-state schools, municipalities "sometimes try to deduct a percentage from the funding for independent schools, arguing that these schools often take more advantage than other schools of municipal facilities such as libraries and sports halls."

This cursory overview illustrates that modern nations have developed various funding strategies for education that reflect their chosen political philosophies and attempt to respond to the pressures of a changing global market. Each country profile, of course, offers important nuance and detail.

## *Conditions for funding*

Authoritarian school systems enforce top-down policies that reflect the state ideology and agenda and are not responsive to the needs or beliefs of individual



families. Democratic school systems, in contrast, have an obligation to balance broad expectations such as literacy and civic formation with the beliefs and needs of participating families. Those liberal democracies that lean towards uniformity privilege the state's sway over atmosphere and curricula, and they often require participating families to set conflicting beliefs aside at the schoolhouse door.<sup>14</sup> In such systems, funding of public schools is generally assumed rather than conditional, as long as basic professional standards, licenses, and protocols are followed.

Sometimes such governments attempt to tie funding to outputs such as the students' academic attainment, a premise of the United States' No Child Left Behind as it was deployed in the states. This puts governments in the unenviable position of struggling with vested interests, closing failing schools and attempting to generate more successful institutions. The process is inevitably politically fraught, as reformers such as New York City's Mayor Michael Bloomberg, and former Chancellor of the Washington, D.C. schools Michael Rhee discovered.<sup>15</sup> At the same time, families that find themselves philosophically or pedagogically at odds with a uniform system have to fund their own children's schooling elsewhere, if they have the means.

Pluralistic systems, which in contrast *specialize* in the distinctive beliefs and needs of participating families, have the additional burden of ensuring that the funded schools neither diminish the social contract nor create academic disadvantages or social inequities. This necessitates, from the outset, conditions to which funded schools must adhere, in addition to the requirements that are common to all schools such as safe facilities and professionally trained staff.

*National Curriculum and Exams.* The most common condition for funding is following a national (or provincial) curriculum. The nations which require this include Australia, Bosnia, England, Finland, France, Georgia, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, India, Luxembourg, Singapore and South Africa – to name a few. The national curriculum serves to establish a common academic framework and to strengthen civic knowledge and attachment across the distinctive school atmospheres. Some, but not all, of the countries that enforce a curriculum require funded schools to take national (or provincial) exams mirroring the syllabus.

There are interesting variations that respond to local necessity. Indonesia, a secular nation with a majority-Muslim population, supports non-sectarian, Catholic, and Protestant schools, all of which follow the entire national curriculum. Indonesia also funds Islamic schools, which are only required to follow 70 percent of the national curriculum but may spend the remaining 30 percent of the schedule on religious studies.



The Netherlands, in keeping with its expansive pluralism, allows each funded school to provide an equivalent, but not necessarily identical, curriculum to that recommended by the state. Austria does the same. France sets the national curriculum but permits individual schools to select their own textbooks and pedagogy to accomplish it. Israel allows its Arab-language schools to modify the curriculum in consultation with educational advisors.

Enforcement can be difficult. Israel's ultra-Orthodox, the Haredi, receive government funding for their schools but refuse to implement the core curriculum and focus predominantly upon religious studies (particularly in secondary school). Changing the situation has proven politically impossible. The Supreme Court ruled against public funding for schools that reject the core, but the Haredi have maintained sufficient political power in the Knesset to circumvent the ruling legislatively.

Sometimes the difficulty runs in the opposite direction, in which mandated courses override religious or secular sensibilities. When a Socialist government introduced a human rights and citizenship course to Spain's funded schools, there were protests and court cases on the basis of conscience (the courts upheld the government). In Quebec's Loyola High School case, the Ministry of Education imposed an Ethics and Religious Culture curriculum on all schools and disallowed modification of content or pedagogy, even in the face of conscientious objections from religious schools.<sup>16</sup> On the other hand, one of Norway's required courses, "Christian Knowledge, Religion and Ethics," was found by the European Court of Human Rights as inappropriate for a multicultural society and has since been modified.

*Admissions and Staff Criteria.* Another area in which governments exert control over funded schools is in admissions and staffing policies. At issue here is the right of a school to invoke its principles throughout the atmosphere of the school and in the moral formation of the students, versus legal principles of non-discrimination that may be in effect in society at large. This requires careful negotiation and sensitivity.

Admissions policies vary widely around the world of plural education. Norway and Slovenia, for instance, mandate open admissions in funded schools. Chile will not allow schools to consider parents' ability to pay. Ireland prohibits religion-based admissions, but families generally self-select on the basis of religion. The Netherlands, in contrast, allows religion- or philosophy-based admissions, but requires that the school's beliefs have been clearly and publicly articulated in advance. Israeli public schools are required to have open admissions, but funded private schools may select on the basis of religious beliefs and achievement. It is, however, illegal to discriminate on the basis of economic status, political views, or

ethnicity (although Haredi schools are sometimes suspected of segregating Ashkenazi and Sephardic students).

Some countries take a more nuanced approach. In France, for instance, contract schools may not discriminate by religious commitment, and religious education may not be compulsory. However, parents must sign a contract agreeing to support the mission of the school, and courts have ruled that hearing religious perspectives and having teachers present their faith does not constitute a violation of contract. French-speaking Belgium requires open admissions, but parents must agree in advance to the values the school sets out.

Staffing arrangements also vary. Most plural school systems acknowledge that teachers' authority places them in a unique position to uphold or to undermine the school's mission, and therefore allow hiring on the basis of belief. Most Canadian provinces, French-speaking Belgium, Ireland, and Italy fall in this category. England's Schools Standards and Framework Act of 1998 protects the teaching staff in non-faith schools from discrimination and also allows some employment discrimination in faith-based schools. The rules vary according to the financial and governance arrangement. So-called "voluntary controlled" schools, which are fully funded by Local Education Authorities but may have a religious foundation, are permitted to select one-fifth of the teachers based upon their fitness to give religious lessons. "Voluntary aided" schools receive less money from the LEA for operations but are allowed to select all teachers on the basis of religious faith and to fire them based upon lifestyle choices (cohabitation, divorce, abortion).<sup>17</sup> The Netherlands, in contrast, allows religious hiring but does not permit teachers to be fired for outside behaviors that are not sanctioned by the school's mission.

Other countries allow reference to beliefs only if it is *a propos* the task at hand. The Russian Federation, which does not fund non-state schools, nevertheless prohibits *any* school from hiring on the basis of religion unless it pertains to religious education. On the other side of the spectrum, the Netherlands, Northern Ireland, and England are among the countries that not only permit religious hiring but that also fund religious teacher training programs.<sup>18</sup>

*Additional criteria.* One of the educational policies common to countries from the British Commonwealth is to couple aid with representation on the governing body. In Northern Ireland, for instance, the government funds Catholic schools at 100 percent in exchange for a presence on the Board of Governors. Some Catholic schools resist opening their boards in this way and therefore receive only 85 percent funding. The country profile is worth quoting at length:<sup>19</sup>

Northern Ireland has three main legal categories of publicly funded school:

controlled, voluntary, and integrated. Since 1989 schools in Northern Ireland have had significant responsibility for their own management. All schools have devolved budgets and can choose how to deploy their resources. They all set their own admission criteria and many schools will be directly responsible for the appointment of their own staff. Responsibility for these decisions is vested by law in the Board of Governors of the school. The membership of Boards of Governors is set out in legislation and varies depending on the category of school and the source and level of funding afforded to it.

### *Controlled schools*

Controlled schools are wholly owned and run by the Education and Library Boards (ELBs) and therefore comprise the 'state' sector of schools. Many of the schools previously owned by the Protestant churches in Northern Ireland were transferred to the local authorities from the 1930s onwards in return for positions on the schools' management structures.<sup>20</sup> In 1968, this right was extended to include any new (that is, not transferred) controlled schools that were opened by the ELBs. Controlled schools are attended by mainly Protestant pupils. Controlled schools receive full funding for their capital and recurrent expenditure and are under the direct control of local ELBs. The Boards of Governors of these schools include representatives of the original Protestant transferors (i.e. Church of Ireland, Presbyterian and Methodist churches).<sup>21</sup>

### *Voluntary schools*

Voluntary schools are publicly-funded schools which are not in the ownership of the state. The majority of these schools is in the ownership and management of the Catholic Church and are attended by mainly Catholic pupils.<sup>22</sup> There is also a small number of schools in which children are taught through the medium of Irish.<sup>23</sup> The Board of Governors of a voluntary school contains members nominated by the trustees of the school (usually the Catholic clergy), together with representatives of parents, teachers and ELBs.<sup>24</sup> Full running costs are met in the same way as with controlled schools. Since 1993, voluntary schools have been able to opt for 100 percent capital funding in which case the Department of Education has the right to nominate members on the Board of Governors.<sup>25</sup> If schools do not opt for this they can still receive 85 per cent of their capital costs.

Many countries with plural education place historically-conditioned requirements upon funded schools. South Africa ruled racial segregation in the schools illegal and

is vigilant in reversing remnants of its apartheid-era practices. Azerbaijan's educational policies in the post-Soviet era aim to rejuvenate cultural pride and to protect against religious extremism. Thus, while there is some funding for non-state schools, even non-funded private schools must employ at least 80 percent Azerbaijani staff. Additionally, all schools are subject to the 2009 Education Law which "forbids spreading propaganda of religions with violence or by threatening violence." Indonesia bans atheist and communist ideology in its funded and non-funded schools, an educational priority since a 1968 communist coup in which thousands of citizens died. Estonia, in recovering from decades of Soviet rule, funds Russian schools but requires 60 percent of instruction to be in the Estonian tongue.

In sum, the countries that are committed to educational pluralism are mindful of the balance between the school's right to maintain its distinctive ethos, and the government's responsibility to ensure academic and civic standards across all school sectors. Each country profile has appropriate elaboration.

## *Innovations*

These volumes illustrate the ways in which some governments support plural education and outline the conditions that follow funding. It is evident that many governments are re-thinking their approach to pluralism, in large-scale changes such as entirely new funding models in Sweden or pilot voucher programs in India. The country profiles also provide less common examples of creative funding that are specific to a country or a need and which are worthy of wider consideration. Spain, for instance, sets quotas for special needs children in each funded school and ensures the financial support necessary to meet their educational needs.

Some countries and provinces are financially supportive of homeschooling. Canada's Alberta province provides 15 percent of provincial per-pupil cost to local schools for costs related to support of homeschooling.<sup>26</sup> Finland gives homeschoolers textbooks and other supplies. The Philippines funds municipal teachers to work with homeschooling families on the course of study.

One quite interesting idea comes from Austria, whose commitment to educational pluralism and parental choice generated "an extensive system of educational counseling" to help families navigate their options. Supporting parents in the process of school selection seems to be important to the success of school choice programs, particularly when systems or families are transitioning. Research into Washington, D.C.'s Opportunity Scholarship Program indicates that such guidance was crucial to parents' ability to negotiate a new approach to schooling.<sup>27</sup>

## Conclusions

All democratic governments wrestle with the balance between enforcing national educational norms and honoring plural belief systems. Since governments fund what they consider education “for the public good,” a discussion over what constitutes public education is worth having. In some nations, the definitional question is currently front and center. In Australia, which has placed increasing priority upon parental choice, there is a public conversation about whether “public education” should refer to all schools that receive public funds, or only to government-operated schools. In other nations, the question is framed by historical categories that perhaps need to be re-visited. In the United States, for instance, voucher programs, in which stipends follow children to the school of their parents’ choice, are often considered to be “funding private education.” It might be more appropriate to think of such programs as *another avenue* for public education instead of as a threat to the existing system.

Education reformers in the United States also face the accusation that vouchers and tax credits “harm the public schools.” Framing it this way begs the question of why “public education” should exclusively refer to state-run schools. The financial concern may be misplaced. A recent study of voucher programs across the country indicates that the public school system is not diminished if certain financial constraints are honored, such as funding vouchers from a school district’s variable, not fixed, costs. As the author wrote in his Executive Summary,

The United States’ average spending per student was \$12,450 in 2008-09. I estimate that 36 percent of these costs can be considered fixed costs in the short run. The remaining 64 percent, or \$7,967 per student, are found to be variable costs, or costs that change with student enrollment. The implication of this finding is that a school choice program where less than \$7,967 per student is redirected from a child’s former public school to another school of his or her parents’ choosing would actually improve the fiscal health of the average public school district. And, it would provide more resources for students who remain in public schools.<sup>28</sup>

This analysis is interesting not only for the United States but for other countries which are trying to combine sound fiscal policy, high attainment and parental preference.

Other nations resolved long ago that “public” referred to funding, not provision. Ireland’s 1937 Constitution states that the government “provides for,” but does not “provide,” free primary education (and secondary as well). The Constitution expressly

forbids a state monopoly on schools, and consequently funds not only nonsectarian state entities but also Catholic, Protestant, Jewish and Muslim schools. Peru's Constitution acknowledges the impossibility of educational neutrality, and therefore supports a variety of school types. The majority of Hong Kong's schools are financially supported by the state but run by charitable organizations that enjoy considerable autonomy.<sup>29</sup>

The educational structures that governments fund always reflect a prior commitment to a particular view of society, the state, and the individual. This has been discussed elsewhere in full. It bears mention here only because it is insufficient to debate funding arrangements without being mindful of the political philosophies behind them.

The same principle applies to the conditions that governments attach to funding. Particularly as systems shift, it is important to seek a careful balance between institutional integrity and appropriate government oversight. Political power can be used to advance an agenda that violates individual or community conscience. Negative examples would be the ongoing battle between the Socialist Party and the Partido Popular in Spain, in which the national curriculum veers sharply depending upon which group has power, or tension created by Quebec's Ethics and Religious Culture curriculum. Positive examples would be the way that England funds schools (sponsored by the Vardy Foundation) that teach creationism, or that the Netherlands requires evolution to be taught as a theory in all schools but does not include it on mandated, national exams. The Netherlands has found a way to balance the scientific community's norms with individual sensibilities, even with respect to this highly-charged issue.

In the United States, as tax credits and vouchers permit more children to study at non-state-sponsored schools, such questions will be ever more in the public eye.<sup>30</sup> Here, too, robust politico-philosophic conversations are necessary to undergird lasting change and to ensure that changes sufficiently protect the common good and institutional integrity.<sup>31</sup>

At a more practical level, governments have a responsibility to fund schools that do a good job of moral and academic formation, and to de-fund schools that do not. High per-capita spending does not equal high literacy and numeracy, as the United States has discovered. At the same time, funding non-state schools does not *ipso facto* ensure high academic attainment, as outcomes in New Zealand illustrate. It is incumbent upon policy-makers to tack back and forth between political theory, the needs of individual neighborhoods, the beliefs of families, and budgetary constraints. Sometimes this task requires the art of public persuasion. It always requires comparative knowledge, which is what these volumes provide.



## Endnotes

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- <sup>2</sup> <http://www.statebudgetsolutions.org/issues/detail/k-12-education>. Visited July 15, 2012.
- <sup>3</sup> Maris A. Vinovskis. 2009. *From A Nation at Risk to No Child Left Behind: National Educational Goals and the Creation of Federal Education Policy*. New York: Teachers College, Columbia.
- <sup>4</sup> From “India” by Prachi Deshmukh Odhekar in volume 4 of *Balancing Freedom, Autonomy, and Accountability in Education*.
- <sup>5</sup> Paul Peterson, Ludger Woessmann, Eric A. Hanushek, Carlos X. Lastra-Anadon, *Globally Challenged: Are U.S. Students Ready to Compete? The Latest on each state’s international standing in math and reading*. Harvard’s Program on Education Policy and Governance and *Education Next*, Taubman Center for State and Local Government, Harvard Kennedy School. PEPG Report No.: 11-03. August 2011.
- <sup>6</sup> Council on Foreign Relations. 2012. “U.S. Education Reform and National Security.” *Independent Task Force Report No. 68*. Joel I. Klein and Condoleezza Rice, Chairs. Julia Levy, Project Director.
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- <sup>9</sup> Witte, John, Jr. and Joel A. Nichols. 2011. *Religion and the American Constitutional Experiment, Third Ed.* Boulder: Westview Press.
- <sup>10</sup> Charles Leslie Glenn, Jr. 1988, 2002. *The Myth of the Common School*, University of Massachusetts Press; 2011. *Contrasting Models of State and School: A Comparative Historical Study of Parental Choice and State Control*. New York: Continuum.



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- <sup>12</sup> House of Commons Hansard Debates for 20 July 2004 [pt 1], Denominational Schools; <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200304/cmhansrd/vo040720/halltext/40720h01.htm>).
- <sup>13</sup> From "Romania" by Raluca Bîgu in volume 2 of *Balancing Freedom, Autonomy, and Accountability in Education*.
- <sup>14</sup> Eric A. Degroff. *Parental Rights and Public School Curricula: Revisiting Mozart after 20 Years*. Journal of Law & Education. 38. 1:2009, 83-133.
- <sup>15</sup> Terry M. Moe. 2011. *Special Interest: Teachers Unions and America's Public Schools*. Washington, D.C.: Brookings; Steven Brill. 2011. *Class Warfare: Inside the Fight to Fix America's Schools*. NY: Simon & Schuster.
- <sup>16</sup> Douglas Farrow, expert witness. "On the Ethics and Religious Culture Program." Re: *Loyola High School et John Zucchi c. Michelle Courchesne, en sa qualite de ministre de l'Education, du Loisir et du Sport*. Cour superieure, district de Montreal, N. 500-17-045278-085. Copyright D.B. Farrow, January 2010; Superior Court, Canada, Province of Quebec, District of Montreal. No. 500-17-045278-085. Date: June 18, 2010. Present: The Honourable Gerard Dugre, JSC. *Loyola High School and John Zucchi, Plaintiffs, v. Michelle Courchesne, in her capacity as Minister of Education, Recreation and Sports*.
- <sup>17</sup> Lucy Vickers, "Religious Discrimination and Schools: The Employment of Teachers and the Public Sector Duty," in Myriam Hunter-Henin, ed. 2011. *Law, Religious Freedoms and Education in Europe*. London: Ashgate.
- <sup>18</sup> Christopher McCrudden, "Religion and Education in Northern Ireland: Voluntary Segregation Reflecting Historical Divisions," in Myriam Hunter-Henin, ed. 2011. *Law, Religious Freedoms and Education in Europe*. London: Ashgate
- <sup>19</sup> From "Northern Ireland" by Laura Lundy in volume 2 of *Balancing Freedom, Autonomy, and Accountability in Education*.
- <sup>20</sup> For an account of this process, see S. Dunn, 'A short history of education in Northern Ireland, 1920 – 1990', Annex B in the *Fifteenth Report of the Standing*

- <sup>21</sup> There is a voluntary body, the Transferors' Representatives' Council, which represents the interests of the three main Protestant churches (the Church of Ireland, the Presbyterian Church in Ireland and the Methodist Church) in controlled schools
- <sup>22</sup> There are 433 voluntary primary schools, only 16 of which are not Catholic maintained. There are 76 voluntary secondary schools, only one of which is not a Catholic maintained school. There are 54 voluntary grammar schools: 32 of these are Catholic schools and 22 are non-Catholic.
- <sup>23</sup> There are 12 publicly funded Irish medium schools, 11 primary schools and one secondary school. These are non-denominational. However, because of the close identification of the Irish language with the Catholic population, the majority of pupils will be from the Catholic community.
- <sup>24</sup> Sch. 4 to the Education and Libraries (NI) Order 1986 substituted by Sch. 3 of the Education (NI) Order 1993.
- <sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>26</sup> Claudia R. Hepburn, "Public Funding of School Choice in Canada: A Case Study," in David Salisbury, James Tooley, eds. 2005. *What Americans can Learn from School Choice in Other Countries*. Washington, D.C.: Cato Institute.
- <sup>27</sup> Thomas Stewart and Patrick J. Wolf, "The Evolution of Parental School Choice," in Frederick M. Hess and Bruno V. Manno, eds. 2011. *Customized Schooling: Beyond Whole-School Reform*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- <sup>28</sup> Benjamin Scafidi. March 2012. "The Fiscal Effects of School Choice Programs on Public School Districts." The Friedman Foundation for Educational Choice National Research.
- <sup>29</sup> McKinsey & Company. 2010. *Education: How the world's most improved school systems keep getting better*. Authors: Fiona Mourshed, Chineszi Chijioke, Michael Barber.
- <sup>30</sup> Walter Feinberg. 2006. *For Goodness Sake: Religious Schools and Education for Democratic Citizenry*. (New York: Routledge).

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<sup>31</sup> Jocelyn Maclure and Charles Taylor. 2011. *Secularism and Freedom of Conscience*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. This book makes helpful distinctions between “republican” and “liberal-pluralist” secularisms, although it insufficiently addresses institution, as opposed to merely individual, freedoms.